

second-in-command, a former Taliban finance minister and two Taliban shadow governors. These were the most significant captures of Afghan Taliban leaders since the start of the war in Afghanistan. Building the capacity and reinforcing the will of other countries to strike at al Qaeda will, I believe, be critical toward eliminating this threat forever. President Obama's administration deserves to be congratulated for its progress on both fronts.

Importantly, this administration understands that we need a comprehensive strategy to prevent terrorism. Just as you cannot effectively rid your backyard of poison ivy by just cutting off all the leaves, we cannot effectively destroy terrorist cells unless we take them out by the roots, cutting off the supply of recruits that feeds them. So, in addition to ramping up our missions to capture and kill terrorists, we are also now placing a greater emphasis on taking the necessary measures to prevent the recruitment of violent extremists.

Mr. Speaker, with the responsible new steps being taken by our Commander in Chief, with the outstanding leadership by our commanders on the ground, and with the unrivaled dedication and courage of all of our men and women in uniform, I have no doubt that our Nation is safer today than it was 3 years ago. We have come a long way in keeping America safe from future terrorist attacks.

UNDERSTANDING THE BUDGET SURPLUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARTLETT. Mr. Speaker, during the Clinton years, Washington was telling the American people that we had a budget surplus and that we were paying down the debt. After a number of months of bragging about this budget surplus we had and about how much we were paying down the debt, we had to raise the debt limit ceiling.

Now, I asked our leadership, Isn't it going to be a little difficult to explain to the American people why we have to raise the debt limit ceiling if for these many months we have been paying down the debt? Why would you have to raise the debt limit ceiling if you've lowered the debt?

Well, you may not be surprised that what comes out of Washington is not always altogether truthful.

I have a little chart here that helps to explain what happened and why we had to raise the debt limit ceiling when we had a so-called "budget surplus" and were telling the American people that we were paying down the debt.

Now, we had surpluses in Social Security and we had surpluses in Medicare, and we had a lockbox. You may remember the lockbox. We had a lockbox on Social Security and Medicare surpluses. The lockbox said that

you couldn't transfer those moneys to the general Treasury, that you had to pay down the public debt with those moneys. So what we did was take the surpluses from the Social Security trust fund and the Medicare trust fund—and there were surpluses there—and we paid down the public debt; but for every dollar we paid down on the public debt, we incurred another dollar debt in the trust funds.

You see, the national debt, the debt that really counts, is the sum of the public debt and the trust fund debt. So, if you simply decrease the public debt by increasing the trust fund debt, you've done nothing to the national debt. It's a little bit like taking money from your right-hand pocket and putting it into your left-hand pocket. Obviously, if you do that, you are neither richer nor poorer after you've taken money from your right-hand pocket and put it in your left-hand pocket. That is what we were doing.

Now, very few people know that there is a difference between the public—oh, the public debt is the Wall Street debt. That's all those instruments that we give to people when they loan us money. The trust fund debts, of course, are debts that we owe to our trust funds because, for many years, we've been taking moneys from the American people for Social Security, for Medicare, and for about 50 other trust funds—the Highway Trust Fund and so forth—and we presumably are taking that money and putting it into trust for them.

Is that what happens? No, that is not what happens.

What happens is we take that money, and if we have any surplus money after meeting our Social Security and Medicare obligations, we then take that money and immediately convert it into a nonnegotiable U.S. security. We move it over to the general trust fund and we spend it. So there is, in fact, no money in the Social Security trust fund or in the Medicare trust fund. That is really a misnomer. It is not a trust fund. I guess you might call it a "trust debt" because there is nothing there but IOUs.

Now, this year, for the first time, we've spent more money on Social Security than we took in in Social Security. We didn't expect that to happen for several years, but we still have about, I think, \$2.5 trillion of surpluses in the Social Security trust fund, so we'll be paying Social Security for a while if we can collect or can borrow enough money from other places to make up for the money that we took from the Social Security trust fund and spent.

So, for those months and a couple of years, we were telling people we were paying down the debt. I talked to the CBO, and I think there was never a moment in time, if we kept our books on the accrual method—which, by the way, we require every small business to do—when the national debt went down.

Now, another thing: The debt will always go up more than the advertised

deficit. How can the debt go up more than the advertised deficit? The debt goes up more than the deficit because we make the silly statement that the Social Security surplus and the Medicare surplus offset the debt. Of course, if you take that surplus and spend it, it simply incurs another kind of debt.

Well, I hope this helps you to understand. I just thought you'd like to know.

PRAISING THE OUTSTANDING WORK OF OUR FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BRIGHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise the outstanding work of our fighting men and women stationed overseas. Too often, their work goes unnoticed, but our safety and security is contingent upon their success. On Monday, however, the entire world took notice of their excellent work.

Two of al Qaeda's top leaders were killed in a joint effort between Iraqi and U.S. forces. General Odierno said it was "potentially the most significant blow to al Qaeda since the beginning of the insurgency."

Their success has not been by accident nor has it been limited to Iraq. Our allies across the region are beginning to actively engage in the fight against terrorism, and it is yielding successful results. We must send a loud message that those who seek to do us harm will pay the ultimate price. I anticipate our progress will continue in the months ahead because we have a strategy and clear-cut goals in Afghanistan.

The administration and the commanders on the ground know we must root out the terrorists who still reside in the same country from which the 9/11 terror attacks originated. As a result, terrorist leaders are being captured and killed on a regular basis. Special forces and Predator drones, in coordination with the governments in Pakistan and Afghanistan, have captured or killed more than 600 of al Qaeda's fighters and associates in 2009 alone, far more than in 2008. This is more than triple the amount from the period of 2004–2008 combined.

The new counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan helped lead to the capture of, among others, the Taliban's second in command, a former Taliban finance minister, and two shadow governors of Afghan provinces. These are the most significant captures of the Afghan Taliban leaders since the start of the war in Afghanistan.

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However, as we continue to move forward in Iraq and Afghanistan, we must never forget about our number one target. That's Osama bin Laden. The man who was behind the 9/11 attacks must be brought to justice in order to send a